S/2015/735

Readex
Fiche

United Nations S/2015/735

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 September 2015

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2211 (2015), in which the Council requested me to report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It covers developments since the issuance of my report of 13 March 2015 (S/2015/173) and provides information on peace and security developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region until 15 September 2015.

II. Recent developments

A. Political and security developments

2. The implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework continued to face challenges during the reporting period, notwithstanding the relative progress described in section III of the present report. Those challenges include the continuing presence of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri and other armed groups; and the slow progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, which concluded the Kampala Dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) rebel movement. The political and security situation in the region was also significantly affected by the crisis in Burundi.

[1] In this context, the region is defined as covering the 13 signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as guarantors for the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations. For further information, see S/2013/119 and S/2013/131, annex.

15-16013 (E) 011015

Please recycle

3. Illegal armed groups remained active in parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as highlighted in my report on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2015/486). In an effort to neutralize those negative forces, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) conducted military operations against the Allied Democratic Forces and the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri with the support of MONUSCO, significantly weakening the operational effectiveness of the targeted groups.

4. For instance, in Orientale Province, following failed attempts by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to facilitate voluntary disarmament of Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri combatants in May, FARDC and MONUSCO launched military operations against that group on 3 June. As at 18 August, 44 Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri elements had been killed, 56 had been injured and 129 had surrendered or were captured, including 16 commanders. Relative progress was also achieved in FARDC and MONUSCO joint operations against the Allied Democratic Forces, although the rebel group remained a serious threat to civilian populations in the Beni area in North Kivu, despite the arrest of its leader Jamil Mukulu in the United Republic of Tanzania on 20 April.

5. FARDC also conducted military operations against FDLR. At the meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework held in Nairobi on 22 July, the Democratic Republic of the Congo delegation reported that, of an estimated 1,200 FDLR combatants known to be active in the eastern part of the country, 338 had surrendered and were in the Bahuma transit camp in Kisangani. Another 430 combatants had been forcefully disarmed, killed or captured, including one high-ranking FDLR combatant, bringing the total number of FDLR combatants neutralized to 768. The Government delegation estimated that 432 FDLR combatants remained active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations has yet to verify those figures, as MONUSCO did not participate in FARDC operations against FDLR. The resumption of military cooperation between FARDC and the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade against FDLR continued to be linked to the strategic dialogue between the Government and MONUSCO, which was ongoing during the period of the present report.

6. Regarding progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, including the repatriation of the ex-M23 combatants from Uganda and Rwanda, following a four-day visit by Congolese Government officials to Rwanda from 20 to 24 April, 13 of the estimated 144 ex-M23 combatants granted amnesty by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were repatriated. Some 309 ex-M23 combatants remain in Rwanda. The delegation, led by the Vice-Minister for Defence, also agreed with Rwandan officials on a sequence of steps for the transfer of weapons and military equipment handed over by ex-M23 members. In that regard, both sides agreed that a weapons identification and verification process will be jointly carried out by military experts from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, with the support of United Nations conventional arms experts, on dates to be determined by the parties.

7. On 12 June, the Democratic Republic of the Congo national oversight mechanism and the secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes

Region (ICGLR) organized a meeting in Kinshasa, in compliance with the decision of the ninth Extraordinary Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Heads of State and Government to accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. Subsequently, as a follow-up to the Kinshasa meeting, the Office of my Special Envoy participated in a series of ICGLR-led high-level and technical-level meetings between Congolese and Ugandan officials in Kampala from 3 to 5 August. The Democratic Republic of the Congo delegation was led by Professor Aimé Ngoi Mukena, Defence Minister, who also met the ex-M23 leadership in the camp in Bihanga, Uganda. During the Kampala meeting, officials from both countries agreed to establish a task force comprising experts from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, ICGLR, the United Nations, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community to develop a comprehensive repatriation plan. MONUSCO was requested to support the ex-combatants. It was further agreed that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would take concrete steps to assure the ex-combatants of their safety upon returning to the country.

8. Despite the above efforts by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, with the support of ICGLR and the United Nations, the mission did not result in any new repatriations. The ex-M23 combatants in the Bihanga camp pointed instead to outstanding issues in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. They also claimed not to have received the appropriate directive from their leaders to take part in the process. So far, 198 of 552 ex-M23 combatants granted amnesty by the Government have been repatriated. It is estimated that some 1,500 ex-M23 combatants remain in Uganda. Former leaders of the rebel movement continued to oppose the repatriation process, owing to stated concerns for the security of returnees, uncertainty over their future in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and outstanding issues in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. A similar meeting and field visit scheduled on 6 and 7 August to Rwanda was postponed at the request of the Government of Rwanda. ICGLR was requested to propose new dates.

9. The political and security situation in Burundi during the reporting period required immediate and urgent attention. As indicated in my report on the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi issued on 7 July (S/2015/510), the nomination, on 25 April, of outgoing President Pierre Nkurunziza as the ruling party's candidate in the presidential election triggered a crisis, including the displacement of more than 185,000 Burundians, as well as killings, arrests and detentions. Regrettably, a political dialogue between key Burundian stakeholders, facilitated consecutively by my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and my Special Representative for Central Africa, in support of the region and the African Union, did not fully succeed in reducing tensions and creating an environment conducive to peaceful and transparent elections. Given the continuing impasse, an emergency summit of the East African Community appointed President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on 6 July to facilitate talks between the Burundian parties.

10. On 14 July, President Museveni carried out a two-day visit to Burundi, during which he encouraged the main stakeholders to resume dialogue under the facilitation of the Minister for Defence of Uganda, Crispus Kiyonga. The Uganda-led talks were temporarily suspended on 19 July, following a three-day consultation in Bujumbura by Minister Kiyonga. However, despite the region's efforts, and my appeal for the postponement of the elections, the Government of Burundi proceeded

with parliamentary and presidential elections on 29 June and 21 July respectively. Although the elections were boycotted by the opposition, the names of opposition candidates remained on the ballots and votes were cast for those candidates. According to results released by the electoral commission on 25 July, President Nkurunziza was re-elected with 69.41 per cent of the vote, followed by opposition leader Agathon Rwasa, who secured 18.99 per cent of the vote.

11. On 4 May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda issued a statement expressing concern over reports that members of FDLR were crossing into Burundi, although the authorities in Burundi denied the reports. Subsequently, at the request of the East African Community, ICGLR dispatched missions from the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the joint intelligence fusion centre to Burundi from 10 to 15 July to investigate the allegations. At the time of writing, the findings were not available. On 12 July, fighting reportedly took place between defecting soldiers of the Burundi National Defence Force and the Burundian army near the border with Rwanda. The defecting soldiers were allegedly led by General Léonard Ngendakumana, an ally of General Godefroid Nyombare, who led the failed coup attempt against President Nkurunziza in May. A dozen rebel fighters were reportedly killed during the fighting.

B. Humanitarian situation

12. The humanitarian situation in the region worsened over the past six months, owing largely to the crises in Burundi and South Sudan, where large numbers of civilians were displaced. The political crisis in Burundi, in particular, unleashed humanitarian consequences affecting several countries in the region, as illustrated by the substantial influx of Burundian refugees into Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and raising security and other concerns. On 11 May, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat (OCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme, with other partners, including the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, met to discuss regional inter-agency preparedness, and to develop a regional refugee response plan on the influx of Burundian refugees into Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The plan, which was revised in August 2015, requires $307 million to manage the possible outflow of some 320,000 Burundian refugees into the region.

13. On 22 May in Nairobi, the Office of my Special Envoy joined United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators from nine countries in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, Regional Directors from 15 humanitarian organizations and representatives from the World Bank to discuss current and projected humanitarian risks that could destabilize the region and place substantial pressure on Governments and humanitarian organizations. Participants urged Governments and regional organizations to intensify efforts to end conflict and instability in affected countries and to allocate sufficient funding to humanitarian relief programmes. They further encouraged the Governments of the region to invest in building resilience and capacities, both at national and regional levels.

14. Earlier, in April 2015, the World Bank and UNHCR released a report entitled "Forced displacement in the Great Lakes region", which analysed the extent, causes and nature of forced displacement, primarily from and within Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (available from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2015/01/24356083/forced-displacement-great-lakes-region). The report makes recommendations for action by Governments, regional institutions, national and regional political actors and development partners. It also makes recommendations on ways political, humanitarian and development activities can address the causes and drivers of conflict and displacement. A working group, including the Office of my Special Envoy, the International Organization for Migration, OCHA, UNHCR and the World Bank, as well as regional partners such as the African Union and ICGLR, is being established to bring all relevant stakeholders together to follow up on the recommendations. An initial planning meeting with key actors was held in Nairobi on 24 July.

15. With respect to finding durable solutions to the protracted refugee situation in the region, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNHCR commenced, on 13 April, a joint biometric registration process to carry out a census of Rwandan refugees in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to determine their willingness to be voluntarily repatriated. The registration process started in Katanga Province. Of the 2,744 Rwandan refugees registered in Katanga, 124 expressed their willingness to be voluntarily repatriated. To date, of the 12,758 Rwandan refugees registered in North Kivu, approximately 1,960 refugees have expressed the desire to return voluntarily. Of the 1,009 refugees registered in Kalehe, South Kivu, 63 have also expressed their desire to return. The registration process is ongoing but has faced challenges in several areas, particularly in North and South Kivu, owing to FARDC military operations, difficulties in accessing the refugees and the alleged link between some Rwandan refugees and FDLR. It is estimated that more than 185,000 Rwandan refugees are currently in North and South Kivu.

C. Human rights, child protection and sexual and gender-based violence

16. The human rights situation in the Great Lakes region remained worrisome. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights organizations reported that armed groups and some elements of State security forces in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan committed gross human rights abuses, including rape, extrajudicial killings, recruitment of children, arbitrary arrests, torture and abductions. However, measures were put in place in some countries to address conflict-related sexual violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, military commanders of FARDC signed a landmark declaration on 31 March as part of the country's national action plan against sexual violence in conflict.

17. In addition, the ICGLR Regional Training Facility on sexual and gender-based violence, located in Kampala and supported by my Special Envoy, engaged in training activities aimed at bringing together relevant Government officials and civil servants, such as military officers, police, magistrates and judicial officers, in order to provide the required tools to effectively address and respond to sexual violence.

D. Regional economic integration

18. Efforts by my Special Envoy and regional leaders to revitalize the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries continued during the period, although progress was affected by the crisis in Burundi. However, my Special Envoy remained committed to that objective and conducted a series of consultations to facilitate the convening of an Economic Community summit in the near future. Meanwhile, Rwanda rejoined the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) during the meeting of ECCAS Heads of State and Government held on 25 May 2015 in N'Djamena.

III. Implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

19. During the period under review, some progress was recorded in the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From 27 April to 2 May, the Ministry of Justice organized a national review that identified 200 recommendations to reform and reorganize the judicial system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Accordingly, the Ministry of Justice intends to submit a five-year programme by the end of 2015 to reform the justice sector. On 16 May, the Minister for Defence launched the National Programme of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration III for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

20. On 30 May, President Joseph Kabila initiated national consultations involving members of the ruling majority, opposition, international community, media and religious leaders on the 2015 and 2016 elections. In his speech during the country's Independence Day celebrations on 30 June, President Kabila mentioned that new voters should be given an opportunity to participate in the forthcoming elections. He also reiterated the urgent need for dialogue among Congolese stakeholders, albeit without external mediation.

21. On 3 and 4 June, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with MONUSCO, collaborated with the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Planning and the national oversight mechanism to organize a high-level seminar to review the implementation of the country's national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The objectives were to strengthen ownership of the implementation of the Framework by relevant Government agencies, improve information-sharing and ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the implementation of national commitments. During the seminar, experts from the Government, together with partners, identified 83 priority actions to be included in the Government's plan for 2016 developed by the Ministry of Planning. The priority actions were incorporated into the recommendations of the budget orientation seminar for 2016, which took place from 14 to 16 July 2015. It is expected that those recommendations will be reflected in the national budget for 2016.

B. Commitments of other countries in the region

22. The reporting period saw continuing efforts by the signatory States to neutralize armed groups that are fuelling instability in the region. On 18 May 2015, the Ninth Extraordinary Summit of the ICGLR Heads of States and Government was convened in Luanda. The Summit was attended by Heads of States of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, South Sudan and Zambia. The Vice-President of the Sudan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, the Minister for Defence of Uganda and high-level representatives of the Congo and Kenya also attended. Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania did not participate. Participants in the Summit urged leaders to strengthen regional cooperation to effectively address the threat posed by armed groups, including FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces. They also directed the ICGLR secretariat to establish a mechanism comprising the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, the African Union, the United Nations, the Southern African Development Community and ICGLR to expedite the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants within three months. They also called upon Governments in the region to strengthen mechanisms to counter the rising threat of terrorism, and recommended that the ICGLR Chiefs of Defence and Chiefs of Intelligence jointly develop a regional counter-terrorism strategy.

23. Meanwhile, a number of important regional meetings related to improving security, in particular combating terrorism, took place in the region. From 25 to 28 June, the Government of Kenya hosted a regional conference in Nairobi on strengthening cooperation to counter violent extremism with about 300 participants, including the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force of the United Nations, international academics and experts. The regional conference was a follow-up to a summit on countering violent extremism held by the United States of America in Washington, D.C., in February 2015. In addition, on 14 July, the African Union convened a meeting of intelligence and security chiefs from the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Kampala. The meeting discussed measures to enhance security cooperation and build capacities to fight terrorism and contain transborder crimes.

24. In an important development relating to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework commitments and the provisions of Security Council resolution 2136 (2014), in which the Council called upon all States to deny support to armed groups, Jamil Mukulu, the leader of the Allied Democratic Forces who had been on the Sanctions List since 12 October 2011 for the recruitment of child soldiers, killings, maiming, sexual violence and attacks on peacekeepers, was arrested in the United Republic of Tanzania in April 2015. The Tanzanian courts authorized his extradition on 25 June, and he is currently detained in Uganda. The existing security and judicial cooperation, exemplified by the arrest and extradition of Jamil Mukulu and his associates, significantly contributes to fighting impunity stemming from the activities of armed groups in the region.

25. On 2 September, Bosco Ntaganda, former FARDC Commander and leader of the rebel group Union des patriotes congolais, pleaded not guilty before the International Criminal Court after having voluntarily surrendered himself to be transferred to the Court in March 2013 for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Ituri in 2002-2003. The Ntaganda trial is the fifth case related to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to be brought before the

Court. I encourage all signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to work together to ensure that those who commit grave violations of human rights are brought to justice.

26. In that regard, on 25 and 26 August, the Ministers for Justice of ICGLR member States met in Livingstone, Zambia, to adopt the Domestication Road Map 2015-2018 developed by the ICGLR National Coordinators and Legal Focal Points. In their final Declaration, the Ministers undertook to speed up and complete the domestication process of the Protocols related to (a) Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes Region; (b) Judicial Cooperation; (c) Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children; and (d) Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. They also committed to promote, among other things, mutual legal assistance in order to combat transnational crimes, in particular terrorism in the Great Lakes region.

C. International commitments

27. My Special Envoy and his Office continued to engage the international community and development partners with a view to coordinating messaging and aligning ongoing initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. My Special Envoy also continued his close collaboration with the team of Envoys, the International Contact Group and bilateral and multilateral partners to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to secure extrabudgetary resources to implement transborder activities and projects aimed at building confidence between the leaders of the region. In that regard, the trust fund of the Office of my Special Envoy received grants from Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, bringing the total received to date to $1.2 million.

28. The Office of my Special Envoy also continued to cooperate closely with ICGLR. On 14 May, the two entities signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the planning and organization of joint activities, events and projects in support of the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of 2006 and the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

29. In the same vein, the United Nations country teams in the Great Lakes region worked closely with my Special Envoy to advance the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 23 June, the United Nations Resident Coordinators from the Great Lakes region met in Antananarivo in the margins of the Regional Bureau cluster meeting, held annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to approve the United Nations country team regional strategy plan to support the implementation of the Framework. A detailed action plan is being developed in line with the broad objectives of the road map outlined by my Special Envoy and his Office.

30. On 12 July, the Office of my Special Envoy and the World Bank co-organized the second meeting on regional approaches to development in the Great Lakes region in Addis Ababa. The meeting brought together Ministers, Government officials and private sector actors from signatory States. It aimed to evaluate progress since the last meeting held two years ago and examined opportunities for enhancing collaboration in the region. Among other issues, participants discussed

the importance of allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

D. Oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

31. Further to the recommendations contained in paragraph 61 of my previous report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the African Union and the United Nations stepped up efforts to galvanize support for the implementation of the Framework and strengthen its governance structures. In that context, my Special Envoy and the African Union Peace and Security Commissioner, Smail Chergui, convened the second meeting of the guarantors of the Framework on 13 June in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the margins of the twenty-fifth Summit of the African Union.

32. During the meeting, participants acknowledged the slow progress in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and stressed the urgent need for renewed efforts to accelerate the attainment of the objectives of the Framework. In particular, they encouraged the signatories to assume greater ownership of the governance structures and of the implementation of the Framework. Participants also called upon the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the region to convene a meeting to jointly develop proposals in that regard.

33. As a follow-up to the second meeting of the guarantors, my Special Envoy and the African Union Peace and Security Commissioner convened a ministerial retreat of signatory States in Nairobi on 10 July. The meeting created a unique opportunity for Ministers and other high-level representatives to undertake a joint assessment of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and explore measures to enhance the role of signatory States. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Burundi and Kenya and the Minister for Defence of South Africa were present, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia were represented by senior officials.

34. The participants of the retreat emphasized that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remained a relevant instrument to sustain peace, security and cooperation in the region. In that regard, participants endorsed a set of proposals aimed at strengthening the governance structures of the Framework and increasing the ownership by member States. Those proposals include: (a) the convening, as required, of special sessions of the regional oversight mechanism in addition to the regular meetings held in the margins of the United Nations general debates and the African Union summits; (b) the championing of priority actions derived from the Regional Plan of Action by the Heads of State and Government of the region; and (c) the personal participation of Heads of State and Government in regional oversight mechanism meetings, and the participation of their designated representatives in Technical Support Committee meetings.

35. The participants also encouraged the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to continue to play a catalytic role and to meet on a regular basis. Participants further recommended the convening, as necessary, of ministerial segments during regional oversight mechanism meetings. My Special Envoy will continue to consult the signatories on how best to implement the recommendations,

following the consideration and adoption of the recommendations by the Heads of State and Government of the region.

36. During the reporting period, the Office of my Special Envoy facilitated two meetings of the Technical Support Committee, during which participants reviewed developments in the region and discussed the challenges to the implementation of the Framework. At their tenth meeting, held in Nairobi on 22 July, Technical Support Committee members considered and finalized the outcome document of the aforementioned Ministerial retreat. The outcome document will be submitted for endorsement by the Heads of State and Government of the region during the sixth regional oversight mechanism meeting, to be held on 29 September in New York.

IV. Activities of my Special Envoy

37. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy and the Office maintained a brisk pace to help address the following priority areas of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework: the neutralization of negative forces through encouraging the resumption of military cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO; the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, in particular the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants in Rwanda and Uganda; strengthening coordination and building strategic partnerships with United Nations country teams and regional organizations to support the implementation of the Framework; strengthening the Framework process and its governing mechanisms; promoting durable solutions on refugees and internally displaced persons; combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources; supporting efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve progress on the national commitments of the Framework; expediting preparations for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference, scheduled for 24 and 25 February 2016 in Kinshasa; and accelerating efforts to mobilize the *forces vives* in the region, in particular women, youth and civil society.

Neutralization of negative forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

38. My Special Envoy travelled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage the authorities and relevant stakeholders. On 13 March, my Special Envoy met President Kabila in Kinshasa and discussed, among other things, issues related to cooperation between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO, in particular on the need to resume military actions against FDLR. During the meeting, my Special Envoy encouraged President Kabila to sustain and strengthen partnership through a structured dialogue with MONUSCO in order to resolve issues of concern. In his response, President Kabila agreed with the need for a strategic dialogue to discuss all issues between the United Nations and the Government, and reiterated his disposition to improve relations with MONUSCO.

39. On 8 July, my Special Envoy visited the Bahuma transit camp in Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which hosts some 768 ex-FDLR combatants and their dependants. He urged the ex-FDLR combatants to agree to return to their country of origin and assured them of the international community's commitment to support a safe and dignified repatriation process.

40. On 15 July, my Special Envoy, together with ICGLR Executive Secretary Ntumba Luaba, met President Kabila at his request. The President briefed them on

the situation regarding FDLR and his ongoing consultations with Congolese stakeholders in preparation for a national dialogue. My Special Envoy commended the Government for the military operations by FARDC against FDLR and requested the Government to consider the early resumption of military cooperation and collaboration with MONUSCO to neutralize FDLR. He commended President Kabila on the consultations and the planned dialogue and called for a process involving all Congolese stakeholders to develop a consensus-based road map for the forthcoming elections.

41. On 20 August, my Special Envoy travelled to Kigali and engaged the authorities on the continued presence of armed groups in the region and the influx of Burundian refugees into Rwanda and its likely impact on regional stability. On 21 August, my Special Envoy, accompanied by Rwandan officials, visited the Mutobo demobilization and reintegration centre, where ex-combatants, including former FDLR, are demobilized, in order to familiarize himself with the conditions on the ground. He also took the opportunity to visit the Mahama camp to assess the conditions of Burundian refugees.

42. My Special Envoy also focused his activities on the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and on the repatriation of the ex-M23 combatants still cantoned in Rwanda and Uganda. In April and August, the Office of my Special Envoy participated in field visits led by ICGLR to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, as highlighted above. My Special Envoy advocated for the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, including for a voluntary repatriation process, in his engagements with key officials in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

Good offices on the crisis in Burundi

43. In order to avert a looming crisis with the potential to undermine peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region, I dispatched my Special Envoy to Burundi on 24 April to help defuse tensions, mitigate the growing humanitarian crisis and facilitate a dialogue on credible, transparent and inclusive elections, in line with Security Council resolution 2211 (2015). My Special Envoy was able to promote dialogue between the parties until the Summit of the East African Community beginning 13 May, during which Heads of State and Government were to deliberate on the core issue of the third-term ambitions of President Nkurunziza. Following the Summit, which did not fully address the issue of the third term, and the attempted coup that took place in Burundi on the same day, the parties agreed to pursue dialogue on outstanding issues on the understanding that the East African Community would remain seized of the third-term issue. The full details of my Special Envoy's engagements in Burundi are captured in my report on the United Nations Electoral Observation in Burundi of 7 July 2015 (S/2015/510). My Special Envoy continues to monitor the situation in Burundi and closely coordinates actions with the team of Special Envoys as well as with the International Contact Group on Burundi.

Coordination and collaboration with regional organizations

44. On 25 August, my Special Envoy held a consultative meeting in Nairobi with senior officials from regional organizations to discuss coordination, collaboration and the enhancement of synergy in programme delivery to support peace, security

and development in the Great Lakes region in line with the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In attendance were the Secretary-General of the East African Community, the Executive Secretaries of the Southern African Development Community and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, the ICGLR Deputy Executive Secretary, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Deputy Secretary-General and Head of the Peace and Security Department of ECCAS and representatives of other organizations, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. Among other decisions, participants agreed to enhance coordination and collaboration on peace and security, investments and regional integration, gender and governance issues, including elections and the management of natural resources. They also agreed to meet regularly under the auspices of my Special Envoy and the Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region of the African Union.

Preparation for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference

45. My Special Envoy's Office has made significant progress in preparing for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. A Steering Committee comprising the Office of my Special Envoy, representatives from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ICGLR secretariat, the United Nations Global Compact, collaborating United Nations entities, private sector representatives, development partners and other stakeholders was established to oversee and guide the organization of the conference. In addition, my Special Envoy presented the objectives of the Conference to more than 250 representatives of business, civil society, investors and Government leaders during the United Nations Global Compact "Business for Peace" annual event, held in New York on 23 June.

46. The Office of my Special Envoy and the ICGLR secretariat continued to work closely with the International Finance Corporation and representatives of the Governments of the region to define the state-of-market-readiness of the regional investment opportunities that were endorsed by the Governments of the region on 17 and 18 December 2014 in Luanda for use at the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. At the same time, my Special Envoy continued to promote strong cooperation with the United Nations Global Compact and the Congolese National Organizing Committee, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and including the Ministers for Planning, Economy and Industry and the Director General of the Congolese Investment Promotion Agency, to ensure the success of the Conference.

47. On 1 and 2 September, my Special Envoy's Office, in conjunction with the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, organized a workshop in Addis Ababa on the regulatory environment and investment climate in the Great Lakes region. The workshop brought together public and private sector representatives and discussed prospects and challenges for investments in the region in preparation for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference.

Promotion of women, youth and civil society organizations

48. On the role of women in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Special Envoy continued to advocate and promote

women's empowerment in the region. In that regard, the Women's Platform for the Framework held its inaugural grantee meeting in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 13 to 15 May 2015. The meeting was organized under the auspices of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, with the support of the Global Fund for Women, Fonds pour les femmes Congolaises, Femmes Africa solidarité and MONUSCO. It brought together 60 women leaders representing 34 grass-roots organizations from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda that are in receipt of grants from the trust fund of the Office of my Special Envoy. The women discussed ways to deepen their knowledge and participation in peace processes in the Great Lakes region and explored opportunities for strengthening collaboration on issues of interest, including livelihood opportunities in the region. The beneficiaries at grass-roots levels also had the opportunity to share experiences regarding their activities, challenges and strategies related to the implementation process. They further explored opportunities for collaboration at country and regional levels.

49. So far, the total amount of grants awarded per country is as follows: the Democratic Republic of the Congo was awarded 25 grants totalling $351,430; Rwanda was awarded 6 grants totalling $87,400; Burundi was awarded 5 grants totalling $60,000; and Uganda was awarded 3 grants totalling $50,000. In terms of thematic areas covered, grants have been awarded to support the implementation of the regional plans of action related to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) ($23,000); for the monitoring of and advocacy for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action related to Council resolution 1325 (2000) ($166,900); to support initiatives to combat violence against women ($144,874); to advance women's livelihoods and development ($210,056); and for projects that can provide access to clean energy at the local level ($50,000).

50. On 18 June 2015, the third conference call of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform took stock of the key conclusions of the inaugural grantee convening, as well as the fundraising activities of the Platform and priority actions for the next three months, including the monitoring of grants disbursed. The Office of my Special Envoy also provided support to ICGLR for the establishment of the secretariat of the ICGLR Regional Women Forum in Kigali during the period under review.

51. Meanwhile, from 7 to 15 June, my Special Envoy and his team participated in a series of high-level meetings and events on the margins of the twenty-fifth Summit of the African Union in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the theme of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063. That included a high-level meeting that stressed the urgent need to address the prevalence, on a global level, of violence against women and human rights violations that affect women and girls, especially in conflict-affected areas. The meeting also underscored the importance of enhancing initiatives such as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework's Women's Platform.

52. My Special Envoy continued to engage with civil society in the region as part of ongoing efforts to promote and strengthen civil society participation in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 29 and 30 April, the Office of my Special Envoy, with the support of MONUSCO, ICGLR, the Government of the Netherlands, UNDP and other United Nations agencies, as

well as the Government of Uganda, organized a consultation involving 45 civil society actors from the Great Lakes region in Entebbe, Uganda. Delegates were selected from national workshops and included civil society actors from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, the civil society forum of ICGLR, the Women's Platform and international non-governmental organizations. Following extensive deliberations, the participants developed an action plan for civil society support and engagement in the implementation process of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in line with the broad objectives of the road map outlined by my Special Envoy.

53. In addition, my Special Envoy, together with the ICGLR Multipurpose Youth Forum and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), set in motion the process to establish youth centres in border communities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to strengthen cross-border cooperation and confidence-building in the region. The first youth centre is expected to be launched by my Special Envoy, with a number of partners, in October. The Office of my Special Envoy has also initiated youth and gender projects with the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries aimed at improving cross-border trade between women and promoting confidence-building and cordial relations between border communities in the region. To further strengthen the ICGLR Multipurpose Youth Forum, established in 2014, my Special Envoy convened a meeting in Nairobi on 25 August involving representatives of the ICGLR secretariat and the Multipurpose Youth Forum and representatives of the Government of Kenya in order to devise ways and means to support the secretariat of the regional Multipurpose Youth Forum on a sustainable basis.

Promotion of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

54. Recognizing the impact of land and property disputes on conflicts, displacement and returns, the Office of my Special Envoy helped ICGLR, UN-Habitat and the Government of Kenya to organize expert workshops and a high-level ministerial meeting on refugees, land and property rights in Nairobi from 21 to 24 April. At the end of the meeting, the Ministers responsible for land and refugee matters committed to operationalizing the ICGLR Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Persons and to link land policies and the protection of refugees to development policies in the region.

55. On 1 September, the Office of my Special Envoy participated in a consultation organized by UNHCR in Nairobi on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and internally displaced persons camps. The meeting focused on the challenges posed by the presence of ex-combatants among displaced populations and the risk of fostering suspicion and mistrust with host authorities, which can lead to border closings and the forced return of individuals.

Consultations on the fight against illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources

56. The Special Adviser to my Special Envoy attended the International Task Force on Illegal Exploitation and Trade in Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region held in Brussels from 24 to 26 March, during which it was highlighted that, apart from armed groups, criminal networks were reported to be deeply involved in

the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. In that regard, my Special Envoy is working on joint projects with other United Nations partners aimed at cutting off the flow of resources to armed groups stemming from the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 14 April, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with MONUSCO and the United Nations Environment Programme, published a report on illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources benefiting organized criminal groups that includes recommendations on how to cut the economic lifelines to armed groups provided by illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources.

V. Observations

57. The past year has witnessed some encouraging steps by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the region to implement their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The high-level seminar of 3 and 4 June on the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the 13 June meeting of the guarantors of the Framework and the ministerial retreat held on 10 July all underscore the continuing relevance of the Framework and the signatories' commitment to achieve its objectives and increase ownership of the implementation process. I welcome those initiatives and encourage the leaders of the region to take immediate steps to implement fully the recommendations of those important meetings. It is my hope that the implementation of those recommendations will help revitalize the Framework, strengthen its governance structures and enhance its potential to help address the daunting peace and security challenges confronting the region, especially as several countries are going through delicate elections and political transitions.

58. I encourage the Heads of State and Government of signatory States to strengthen their commitment to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to champion specific initiatives to help overcome the key peace, security and development challenges facing the region. In that regard, swiftly neutralizing all armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, accelerating the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants and dependants, implementing all other provisions of the Nairobi Declarations and convening a summit of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries should remain among the region's top priorities.

59. I am encouraged by the recent arrest of Jamil Mukulu, which will contribute to the fight against impunity for gross human rights violations. I call upon the judicial authorities of all signatory States to comply with their obligation to cooperate on critical judicial matters, and I encourage them to call upon my Special Envoy for assistance whenever necessary. In that regard, I encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue its efforts to fully neutralize FDLR and to resume joint operations with MONUSCO. I also commend the ongoing collaboration between FARDC and MONUSCO to eradicate other armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, bearing in mind the need to mitigate risks to civilian populations during military operations. The operations should continue in parallel with political and diplomatic efforts, where applicable, until the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is liberated from the harmful presence of illegal armed groups. I call upon the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda

and Uganda to engage in a frank dialogue, with the support of my Special Envoy and other partners, to expedite the repatriation of the ex-M23 combatants still cantoned in Rwanda and Uganda.

60. In view of the upcoming elections in several countries in the region, I urge the Heads of State and Government and all stakeholders to demonstrate leadership and to respect the will of the people as well as the principles contained in their countries' constitutions. I further call for the strict observance of the relevant provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted by the African Union in 2007. As I indicated in several statements during the reporting period, I deplore the violent and polarized context in which the elections of 2015 were conducted in Burundi. I urge the Burundian authorities to uphold the human rights of all Burundians, especially the freedoms of assembly, association and expression. I ask the Burundian Government to take immediate steps to prevent human rights violations and to swiftly bring those responsible for violating human rights to justice.

61. The regional repercussions of the crisis in Burundi should not be underestimated. There are clear indications that the crisis has had far-reaching humanitarian consequences and has fuelled divisions and mistrust that threaten cordial relations between neighbours and jeopardize the region's stability. I call on all States hosting former Burundian officials, including former army officers, to ensure that those individuals do not engage in activities that could further destabilize Burundi. I welcome recent efforts by the East African Community, ICGLR, the African Union and the United Nations to end the crisis and urge all Burundian stakeholders to urgently resume an inclusive and genuine dialogue. In that regard, I extend my full support to the facilitation role entrusted to President Museveni of Uganda. At the same time, I call upon international donors and partners to join the United Nations in its efforts to address the region's humanitarian needs.

62. I commend the initiative of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and welcome the results achieved so far. The Platform remains an unparalleled vehicle to ensure that Great Lakes women's voices are heard and that they actively participate in decision-making, as well as in social and economic development, in the region. I wish to thank the Governments of the Netherlands, Ireland and Norway, the Oak Foundation and individual donors for their generous support to the Women's Platform. I urge other donors to support the initiative, which helps to improve the lives and prospects of vulnerable populations in the region.

63. I welcome the ongoing efforts by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my Special Envoy and ICGLR to prepare for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference, scheduled to take place in Kinshasa early next year. Through the Conference, the Great Lakes region will have a unique opportunity to profile a wide range of investment opportunities selected on the basis of their ability to promote regional integration and economic cooperation and contribute to long-term stability. I call upon the international community, the Heads of State of the region and the business community to support my Special Envoy, ICGLR and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in organizing a highly successful conference.

64. Economic initiatives such as the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference should promote job creation, easier communication and connectivity,

greater productive capacity, new regional value chains and thriving cross-border and intraregional trade. Significantly, they should increase shared prosperity, act as disincentives for supporting or tolerating negative forces and enhance the capacity of States to increase domestic resource mobilization to address their development needs.

65. I wish to acknowledge the contributions made by the Governments of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom to the trust fund managed by the Office of my Special Envoy to boost the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. I am pleased to note the effective collaboration between the Office of my Special Envoy, ICGLR and the countries in the region, especially with regard to the implementation projects related to the Women's Platform, the youth centre for peace and the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. Those projects have the potential to help address the root causes of instability in the region, tackle economic inequality and social injustice and empower women and youth. I also extend my appreciation to all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the Great Lakes region for supporting my Special Envoy.

66. Lastly, I thank my Special Envoy and his Office for their continuous efforts to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in a challenging regional context. I call upon the Security Council and the international community to continue to assist the signatory States as they strive towards peace, security, cooperation and development in the Great Lakes region.